



August 9, 2016

We Are Stronger Together

On July 29, 2016, just one day after an 18 year old unarmed American man was shot in the back by a Chicago policeman, and on a day when at least 1 person was killed and 7 others were shot in Chicago by criminals on the street, Mr. Khizr Khan, a Muslim-American lawyer, rocked the nation at the Democratic National Convention in Philadelphia. Mr. Khan gave his speech while thousands of American flags were waving in the Wells Fargo Center.

These waving flags symbolize America's promise of freedom, liberty, and human rights for all Americans. When Mr. Khan raised his well-worn and well-studied pocket copy of the United States Constitution, it was as if he was raising a religious symbol like a crucifix against the evils of racism and hate that continue to be faced by far too many Americans. That historic moment at the convention was yet another reminder to our nation that we must live up to the words of our Declaration of Independence: "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that ALL people are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness".

America didn't know at the time of Mr. Khan's speech that just the day before, on July 28, an unarmed American named Paul O'Neal lost his life in a series of events that started with stealing a car. If found guilty by a judge or jury of one's peers of the crimes that were committed, O'Neal should have been punished by time in prison and not punished by a death sentence at the hands of law enforcement officers. During his speech, Mr. Khan and his wife were not only standing for their son Army Captain Humayun Khan who was killed in Iraq 12 years ago while fighting and sacrificing his life for his fellow soldiers as a member of the U.S. Army. The still-grieving Khans were also standing for equal protection under law as stated in the 14th Amendment - for the rights of Paul O'Neal and many others with their unalienable right to life as Americans. Section 1 of the 14th Amendment states, in part, that "...nor shall any state deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws".

The high-speed chase on July 28, 2016, which ended with the death of an unarmed American, was a violation of Paul O'Neal's constitutionally endowed rights, his human rights, and was a real violation of all that is hoped for by all humanity.

The release of the video reliving the death of Mr. O'Neal showed a high-speed chase and bullets flying through the South Shore community - a total disrespect to the entire community. The City of Chicago owes that community and the whole city an apology for the trauma it has caused to all of us.

Chicago is fortunate that the flying bullets and reckless police behavior didn't end much more tragically - other bystanders or even police in the line of fire could have been killed. The police chase after a car theft and the ensuing gunfire were violations of Chicago's Police Policy, and the superintendent took action without delay.

In hindsight, Mr. O'Neal would be alive today and Chicago would not be embarrassed nationally and internationally if the City of Chicago Police Department had, for once and for all, previously sent the message that even officers in the Chicago Police Department are bound by the rules of law and order and that police misconduct will not be tolerated.

More than 5,000 bystanders and passengers have been killed in police car chases since 1979, and tens of thousands more were injured as officers repeatedly pursued drivers at high speeds and in hazardous conditions, often for minor infractions, a USA TODAY analysis shows. The bystanders and the passengers in chased cars account for nearly half of all people killed in police pursuits from 1979 through 2013, USA TODAY found. Police across the USA chase tens of thousands of people each year usually for traffic violations or misdemeanors. Recent cases show the danger of the longstanding police practice of chasing minor offenders.

Mohandas K. Gandhi once said, "I believe in the essential unity of all people and for that matter of all lives. Therefore, I believe that if one person gains spiritually, the whole world gains, and if one person falls, the whole world falls to that extent."

It is in the spirit of Gandhi, realizing that we all lose when one person falls, that we must work to end all killings in our city. We must work together to end killings by the police and killings by those misguided souls who walk our streets. We must work together and stand with Mr. and Mrs. Khan for equal protection under law, because it is only then that we are Stronger Together.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'L. Ford', with a stylized flourish at the end.

La Shawn K. Ford
State Representative-Eighth District